



Exploring Evangelism through Social Media Leaders Guide

Materials Needed

WiFi Access

Participant handouts

Books of Common Prayer and/or printouts
of Opening and Closing prayers

Whiteboard or flipchart and markers

Pictures of your parish through the years - these
can be in hard copy or in a slideshow format

Large screen display of your church's Facebook,
Instagram, or Website page

Participant handouts

Optional: Ask members to bring their smartphones,
tablets and laptops

Before You Begin

The world wide web is a new missionary context, a real place where people experience a world of relationships. God is already at work among us there, showing up in social media, search engines and more to link people to each other and to the Holy. This brief forum program – ideal for use before or after worship – is designed to prepare regular people to practice evangelism as we use social media.

Preparing for the Session

Time Frame 45 minutes (depending on your forum slot)

Target Audience Adults or Youth

Setting Classroom, library or parish hall

Outline for the Session

Opening Prayer Led by Forum leader, co-leader or parishioner

Introduction Led by Forum Leader

Activity Led by Forum Leader or co-leader

Closing Charge Led by Forum leader

Welcome

As participants enter the room, greet each person with a hello and a warm smile. Make sure each person has access to the materials they will need. If you would like people to join in the Opening Prayer and/or Closing Prayer, be sure you have enough Prayer Books or printed prayers for each participant. Once it appears everyone has arrived, ask people to prepare for prayer.

Opening Prayer

Choose one of the prayers below or use your own.

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

– Book of Common Prayer, 207

Gracious Father, your Son before he ascended to glory declared that your people would receive power from the Holy Spirit to bear witness to him to the ends of the earth: Be present with all who go forth in his Name. Let your love shine through their witness, so that the blind may see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dead be raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

– Book of Occasional Services, 187

O God, you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

– Book of Common Prayer, 228

Introduction

Leader Welcome to our Adult Forum on Exploring Evangelism through Social Media. Today we are going to look at how we, as a community, as a church, and as part of the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement, can begin living into our call to be evangelists. We have the chance to embrace the spiritual practice of evangelism: we can seek, name, and celebrate Jesus' presence in the stories of all people - in our own lives and in the lives of others - and then invite everyone to more. We will especially pay attention to how we can practice evangelism in all the digital spaces we inhabit - sharing the good news of Christ's love, one post at a time. But first, let us begin by looking at our theological grounding for this call to evangelism.

Ask a volunteer to read the following scripture

Volunteer A reading from Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Leader What stands out to you about this text?
What excites or unnerves you about this text?
What is the challenge of this text? (For instance, this text challenges us to go to places that are not familiar in order to share the love of Christ.)

Leader For some of us, going into digital spaces is just as unknown and foreign as going to the ends of the earth – going overseas, or to a different part of the country, or even into a different neighborhood. But in this day and age, digital spaces are some of the very places where God calls us to share the message and love of Jesus.

Activities

These two activities will help your group to explore why and how we post on social media. If you have a large enough group, divide in half or into groups of three. If you have a small group (5 or fewer), you may want to stay together.

Image Activity

Begin by inviting participants to take part in an imaginative activity. Ask them to close their eyes and take three deep breaths, clearing out any mind-clutter (to-do lists, plans for later in the day, etc.).

Next, pose the questions below to them.

Allow a few seconds between each question before moving on. Instruct members that they are simply to think of their answers at first, not to answer them out loud:

Leader Think about the last time you posted/shared an image on social media.
What did you share?
Where were you?
What device did you use to share it (phone, computer, etc.)?
What platform did you share it on? (Instagram, Facebook etc.)
Why did you decide to post?
What response did you receive?

Leader You may now open your eyes. Take a moment to share your answers in your small groups.

*Beforehand or during the small group sharing, prepare a whiteboard or flipchart by drawing a vertical and horizontal line, forming four quadrants. At the top of each box, write one of these words: **Seek • Name • Celebrate • Invite***

SEEK	NAME
CELEBRATE	INVITE

Leader Can one or two of you share an example where the post you thought about was a “Seeking” post – a post where you were seeking encouragement, advice, maybe an actual service or item, or responding to someone else’s seeking?

Thank people as you summarize their answers under SEEK

Now, can a few people share stories of “Naming” posts – a post that conveyed a statement of truth, or shared a story, or identified a new understanding?

Thank people as you summarize their examples under NAME

Who shared a “Celebrating” post – a post that celebrated an occasion, a person, or good news? Can you share those posts with us?

Thank people as you summarize their examples under CELEBRATE

Finally, did anyone share an Inviting post – a post that invited people to join in an event, cause or action? Can you share those posts with us?

Thank people as you summarize their examples under INVITE

Leader Believe it or not, what you have just done is an example of digital evangelism. You used digital spaces to seek or offer guidance and encouragement, to name truths and to share stories, to celebrate good news, and to invite others to join you. Your sharing those posts inspired other people to act, to remember and to connect. You can see it through the response to your post.. Now, let’s shift the narrative a bit, and take a look at our own community life.

Archive Activity

Note Prepare a small selection of pictures from your congregation’s past, along with a few current social media posts (Facebook, Instagram, church website.) Specifically look for pictures of events such as baptisms, confirmations, blessings of buildings, celebrations of new ministries, first day of Vacation Bible School, etc.

Split the class back into small groups. Give each group a separate picture. Ask them to swap stories about the image, and to create a sample Social Media post from the image. If they seem stumped, ask them the following prompts:

Leader Do you remember this moment in the life of our church?
Who was there?
What did it smell like?
How did it feel?
What were you or others wearing?
What did you hope for that day?
What did this day or event mean to you?
After 5 -7 minutes, gather groups back together.
Ask each group to share about their image, and their “post.”

Leader Which category from the Image Activity does your post fall under?

Seek?

Name?

Celebrate?

Invite?

Once everyone has shared, congratulate them. They have just written their very first digital evangelism posts!

Putting It Into Practice

Leader Before you leave today, please write one post idea on your Take-Home Handout. Identify one way that you can seek, name or celebrate the love of Jesus in your story or someone else's or one way you can invite people to act, reflect or pray with you. Perhaps you want to post something from your experience today. Write about the positive energy you felt about something in the life of our church, or about how your understanding of evangelism has changed. Maybe you want to choose one thing you want the world to know about this Christian community or about an upcoming event.

Give everyone a moment to write one post idea on their take-home sheets.

Leader Here is our covenant. On _____ (*set a date for follow up*) we will check back in with each other and see how we are doing. On that date you will each bring either a print copy of your own digital evangelism post or be able to show it to the group on your phone. We will then celebrate and encourage each other in our efforts, and we will share insights from the experience.

When the group is finished, provide a demonstration by posting a digital evangelism post on either on one of your personal social media accounts, or on your church's feed. If possible do this on a large television or with a projector and screen. Make sure to use appropriate @ and # tags in your post.

This is a good time to explain hashtags and how to tag others using the "@" symbol.

- Hashtags are a way to link and categorize posts, similar to a filing system. For example, if you search #episcopalchurch, you will find posts from people around the world who have written about experiences or posted pictures related to the Episcopal Church.

- The @ symbol is a way to link to individual people, business, or organizations. For example, if you add @bishopcurry to a post on Twitter, your followers will be able to easily visit his account.

Optional Activity

If participants have brought their devices and have Social Media accounts, take a moment to make sure everyone is following your church and the Episcopal Church on each platform. If possible, ask everyone to share your demonstration post on their feeds.

Closing Charge

Leader Evangelism is seeking, naming, and celebrating the good news of Jesus' love in everybody's story, including our own, and then inviting people to more. When we use digital spaces to intentionally seek, name, and celebrate this love, we are reaching out to the far ends of the earth, just as Paul encouraged the early Christians all those years ago. But it does take awareness and intentionality on our part. We must take the time to post a picture of food pantry volunteers stocking the shelves, or a story about how Sunday's sermon changed your thinking, or a welcome to the church's newest member. We must remember to let people know that our doors are open, that our hearts are warm, and that our minds are curious.

Above all, we practice digital evangelism not just on our church's official Facebook page or Instagram feed, but on our personal pages and in our individual feeds. The church can post happy pictures and useful information all day long, but it is your Facebook testimony, your Instagram celebration of Jesus' love made visible, your Twitter statement of faith – these will speak loudest. If you share those posts, you will spur people in your network to act, to remember and to connect. Your post - not the church's - is the light that will shine the brightest. But it must be done with intention and with love.

How do we do this on a regular basis? You've already begun today.

Closing Prayer

As with the opening prayer, use the one below or your own.

If you want others to join the prayer, provide Prayer Books or printed prayers.

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

– Book of Common Prayer, 261

Exploring Evangelism through Social Media

Leaders Guide and Participant Handouts with Exploratory Exercises
available at www.episcopalchurch.org/evangelismtoolkit

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